

CHRONOLOGY OF ROBERT BURNS'S LIFE AND WORK.

1759.

January 25.—Born in a clay-built cottage, raised by his father's own hands, on the banks of the Doon, in the district of Kyle, and county of Ayr. A few days after his birth a wind arose, that crushed the frail structure, and the unconscious Poet was carried unharmed to the shelter of a neighbouring house.

1765. (*ætat* 6.)

Sent by his father to a school at Alloway Miln—taught by one Campbell—same year placed under the care of Mr. Murdoch.

1766. (7.)

May 25.—His father removes to the farm of Mount Oliphant, in the parish of Ayr, leased him by Mr. Ferguson, of Donholm.

1768. (9.)

In the absence of Murdoch, he is taught arithmetic in the winter evenings by his father, who instructs him also in the knowledge of history and geography. On hearing Murdoch read the tragedy of Titus Andronicus, he is so shocked at the recital that he threatens to burn the book.

1769. (10.)

The latent seeds of poetry cultivated in his mind by an old woman who resides in the family, and who had the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, witches, warlocks, apparitions, giants, enchanted towers, etc. The recital of these had so strong an effect on his imagination, that for ever afterwards in his nocturnal rambles, he kept a sharp look-out in suspicious places.

1772. (13.)

Sent to the Parish School of Dalrymple, for improvement in penmanship. Resumes his studies with Murdoch, in the town of Ayr. Revises his grammar, and acquires a knowledge of French. Attempts the Latin, but makes little progress.

1773. (14.)

Forms several connections with other youngers, who possess superior advantages, but who never insult the *cloutierly* appearance of his plough-boy carcase, the two extremes of which were often exposed to all the inclemencies of the seasons. They gave him stray volumes of books, and one (the late Sir John Malcolm), whose heart not even the *Munny Begum* scenes have tainted, helped him to a little French. Parting with these young friends, as they occasionally went off for the East or West Indies, was often a sore affliction, but he is soon called to more serious evils. His father's farm proves a ruinous bargain, and, to clinch the misfortune, he falls into the hands of a scoundrelly factor, who afterwards sat for the picture he drew of one in his *Tale of the Twa Dogs*. He becomes a dexterous ploughman for his age, but his indignation boils at the insolent, threatening letters of the factor, which sets the family all in tears.

1774. (15.)

Is the principal labourer on his father's farm—suffers great depression of spirits—is afflicted with headache in the evenings—forms his first attachment for Nelly Blair, a *bonnie sweet sonsie lass*, the tones of whose voice makes his heart-strings thrill like an Æolian harp. Composes his first song in praise of his *Handsome Nelly*.